

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 08071 292058Z

ACTION CU-05

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL, OEXC

SUBJ: CULTURAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN USG AND GOC

1. IN RECENT MONTHS MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EDUCATIONS HAVE QUERIED EMBASSY REGARDING LEGAL STATUS OF BINATIONAL CENTER NETWORK WHICH OPERATES THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA AND EMBASSY'S RELATIONSHIP TO THESE CENTERS.

2. BOTH MINISTRIES HAVE MADE EXHAUSTIVE SEARCH OF THEIR FILES IN ATTEMPT TO FIND AGREEMENT SUBSCRIBED TO BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT THESE CENTERS BY GOC. AS FAR AS EMBASSY AWARE, NO SUCH AGREEMENT HAS EVER BEEN SIGNED.

3. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IN PARTICULAR IS FACED WITH DIFFICULT PROBLEM SINCE THERE ARE SOME IN ITS RANKS WHO RBTEND THAT BNCS ARE, IN FACT, PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND THEREFORE SUBJECT TO REGULATION BY MINISTRY. SEVERAL CENTERS HAVE BEEN VISITED BY MOE OFFICIALS WHO CLAIM AUTHORITY TO INSPECT THEM WITH A VIEW TOWARD REGULATING THEIR ACTIVITIES. SOME MOE OFFICIALS REFER TO CENTERS AS "PIRATE SCHOOLS."

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4. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SYMPATHETIC TO MOE POSITION AND HAS INFORMALLY ASKED EMBASSY TO CLARIFY ITS RELATIONSHIP TO CENTERS. MINISTRY HAS RECENTLY HELD UP VISAS FOR AMERICAN BNC TEACHERS TO INDICATE TO US THEY VIEW THE PROBLEM WITH SOME CONCERN.

5. INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH GOC OFFICIALS INDICATE THEY

WOULD LIKE TO RESOLVE PROBLEM BY NEGOTIATING CULTURAL AGREEMENT WITH US. COLOMBIA HAS SUCH AGREEMENTS WITH A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WHICH PROVIDE IN GENERAL TERMS FOR CULTURAL AND INFORMATIONAL EXCHANGES.

6. EMBASSY BELIEVES SUCH A SOLUTION IS RATIONAL AND DESIRABLE. IN SHORT TERM IT WOULD SOLVE BNC PROBLEM AND GIVE CENTERS A SPECIAL STATUS CONFERRED BY GOC WHICH WOULD PERMIT THEM TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE WITHOUT UNDUE GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE. IN LONG TERM SUCH AN AGREEMENT WOULD BE PROTECTIVE OF USG INFORMATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS WHICH CONCEIVABLY IN FUTURE COULD BE TARGET OF ATTACK BY UNFRIENDLY ELEMENTS AS IN BNC CASE.

7. PERUSAL OF AGREEMENTS COLOMBIA HAS SIGNED WITH FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY INDICATES THEY ARE UNEXCEPTIONAL "UMBRELLA" AGREEMENTS GRANTING WIDE AND GENERAL AUTHORITY TO CARRY ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS.

8. EMBASSY REQUESTS DEPARTMENT'S PERMISSION TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS WITH GOC ON THIS MATTER. WOULD APPRECIATE ANY APPLICABLE GUIDELINES DEPARTMENT MAY HAVE TO OFFER AS WELL AS COPIES OF AGREEMENTS BETWEEN USG AND MEXICO AND COSTA RICA.
DREXLER

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